

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

Being lonely this evening, husband having gone out to church it was necessary that I should remain at home with my dear old invalid mother. I have been reflecting upon the past, present and future, and I have had some serious reflections.

As time is divided into these three divisions they appear to us who are now on the stage of life. Lo, the past: let us go into the cemetery and look at the records of the past. Who among us my brethren and sisters that have not placed within the narrow limits of the grave some loved one in the past year. Oh, the many vacant seats, the many sad hearts, perhaps some can say we are all here. But I need not go far back before I can see what time with his scythe has done. Yes, your unworthy sister remembers but a few short weeks when we laid a dear friend in the silent tomb. One who one moment was strong and vigorous, blooming for a long life and the next moment was hurled into eternity, having to leave his dear wife and three little ones to lean upon the arm of a cold world. How sad that mother, how desolate that home. Now, I go back a few months farther and remember a kind father was laid away, and back a little farther a dear sister, and still a little farther another sister, and still back farther another sister until three sisters were laid low in the grave.

See what the chilly hand of death has done in so short a time. We will now come back to the year that will soon be in the past. And we will look into the church where we are all one family, and how many are gone from this family, all have gone to the eternal world and awaiting our arrival on that beautiful shore in the sweet by and by. We go to the cemetery and what a volume of biography is the burying place. There they lie the young and old, the humble and esteemed, the active and brave, all changing into the earth from which they came. Heros, glory, splendor and renown are fast fading away. But let them fade; the dead shall live forever, those that sleep in the dust shall awake.

The past is gone and gone forever. O how valuable is time, O how precious is every moment. It is good for us to meditate on the past hours and ask them what report they bear in heaven.

The present is ours, how are we using it, do we find ourselves wanting. Yes, many are far behind. Are we progressing in the divine life or are we retrograding? Let us examine ourselves and wherein we have come short of our duty; wherein we have been burying our talent, let us double our diligence and with renewed energy take courage, and resolve that if our Father help us, we will try and run the race with more patience in the future,

The future is concealed to us, clouds and darkness hide it from our view. We know not what a day, nor an hour, even a minute may bring forth. We do know, however, that death is sure, and after the judgment and then the issues thereof, eternal death, or everlasting life. This is all we know of the future and this is enough if we are wise. If the past is gone, and we may never behold the future, it is our duty to improve the present and prepare for the future. God in his mercy offers salvation and without salvation we are lost forever. O let us think of our souls which will live either in happiness or misery. Let us think of Christ and his precious blood of heaven and its happiness. Upon our present conduct rests our future welfare and eternal destiny.

What dose it profit us if we gain the whole world and lose our souls? What are we treasuring up? What are we sowing? What are we going to reap? Let conscience answer, and the mind determine whether we are proper subjects for God's kingdom. Let us think of the past and all its guilt; of the future and its uncertainty; of the present as ours. May we as one family call upon the name of the Lord and lead a christian life henceforth, and rejoice in glorious hope, and have our names enrolled with those loved ones gone before and be the children of God, and become glorified citizens of immortality in heaven.

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KEEP STRAIGHT ON.

Whenever the Lord starts a man on the road, the devil will try to stop him; and every device, stratagem, and trick, which satanic ingenuity can suggest, will be employed to impede his progress. What then shall the servant of the Lord do? Simply *keep straight on*. He has his work to do, his race to run. There will be allurements, enticements, oppositions, and obstacles, but he has his work to do and his journey to finish. Belzebub's dogs will bark, and Belzebub's arrows will fly; but he must not be dismayed at the tumult, nor be afraid of the danger. The shield of faith will quench every fiery dart of the adversary.

Good men may oppose the servant of God, for Satan likes nothing better than to get a good man to do the devil's dirty work. Little curs may snarl on one side of the way, and stones may fly on the other; and if so the safest place is the middle of the road, and the safest pace is the swiftest. The devil's hue and cry may be raised. Men may cry "Heresy," and shout "Mad dog;" but let your cry be "Life, life, eternal life;" and amid all the contention, babbling and strife, let the voice of the great Captain of Salvation ever sound in your ears the words of command, and bid you "Go forward!" and triumph in his name.

If it is possible for Satan to hinder God's workers he will hinder them; if he can perplex and disturb them he will do it; but if it is a settled thing that you are going forward in the strength of God at all hazards, the hindrances and annoyances will soon subside; the devil's dogs will bark themselves hoarse and you will get out of their hearing, and hold on your way, and finish your course with joy. Fear not O weary toiler, every step brings you nearer to the eternal home; you are leaving your enemies behind you; angels guard your steps; and joys, and welcomes, and palms, and crowns, await you at the journey's end. Go forward! The Captain of Salvation leads the way. Go forward! A cloud of witnesses bear testimony to his goodness and his grace. Go forward;—you with the men of old shall yet obtain a good report, and share the rest that remains for the people of God.—*The Armory*.